



Central African Republic: civil conflict aggravates an already alarming food security situation

- **The recent escalation of civil conflict in the Central African Republic has considerably increased population displacements and disrupted agricultural and marketing activities. Large numbers of people are estimated to be in need of food assistance.**

Agricultural activities disrupted by civil insecurity

The sowing of the 2013 main cereal crop, due for harvest from July, is about to begin mostly in southern areas. According to satellite imagery, rainfall conditions are generally favourable. However, limited access to fields and agricultural inputs due to insecurity has raised serious concern over crop prospects. Moreover, the marketing of the annual cotton crop, a lifeline for the northern part of the country, has yet to start in parts, depriving farmers of an important income source.

Similarly, the harvesting of the secondary 2012 season cereal crop, last December, coincided with the intensification of civil conflict despite the above average rainfall received during the growing season (September-November). Large displacements during harvesting and damage to food stocks and distress sales of livestock were reported.

Trade disruptions cause food prices to escalate

The crisis has also affected significantly trade and marketing activities between different parts of the country, at times bringing transactions to a halt and leading to sharp food price increases. According to a recent multi agency rapid food security assessment, the price of the food basket in early February was up to 40 percent higher than 12 months earlier; in the capital Bangui, food prices have increased by 29 percent between December 2012 and January 2013.

Increased food insecurity due to loss of livelihoods, high food prices and displacement

Given the high share of household income spent on food items (about 70 percent), markets play a crucial role in accessing food. As a result, the food security situation, which was already alarming at 776 000 people as of May 2012, has further deteriorated. Drastic coping strategies, such as selling of productive assets and a reduction in the diversity

and quantity of food consumption compared to 2012 have been reported in many areas.

Overall food insecurity has been exacerbated by the widespread displacement, with the IDP caseload estimated at 173 000. The already precarious food situation is projected to deteriorate until the next harvest, in July 2013, especially in the north of Nana-Grebizi, in Ouham and Vakaga regions; during the lean season (from April/May in most parts) some 80 000 people might additionally become food insecure in the rebel occupied areas alone, unless trade flows resume and food aid distribution is extended.

In response, WFP is planning to scale up its operations in the country to assist an additional 120 000 people in need of food assistance. A close monitoring of the country's food situation and, conditions permitting, an in-depth assessment of the food security situation is warranted.

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